

## **PORT COMMISSION OF THE PORT OF EDMONDS**

### **MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING**

**January 7, 2009**

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#### **Commissioners Present**

Bruce Faires, President  
Mary Lou Block, Vice President  
Marianne Burkhart, Secretary  
Fred Gouge  
Jim Orvis

#### **Staff Present**

Chris Keuss, Executive Director  
Marla Kempf, Deputy Director  
Tina Drennan, Finance Manager  
Beverly Borth, Executive Assistant  
Karin Michaud, Accounting Supervisor

#### **Others Present**

Bradford Cattle, Port Attorney  
Karin Noyes, Recorder

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Commission President Faires called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

#### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

All those in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESIGNATION – PORT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Mr. Keuss submitted a letter to the Port Commission announcing his decision to resign his position as Executive Director for the Port of Edmonds effective the end of the day, May 31, 2009. He said he has enjoyed his tenure with the Port (4 years as Deputy Director, 7 years as Executive Director). He reviewed that with the help of excellent staff and a supportive Port Commission, the Port has accomplished a number things. He particularly noted the following accomplishments with some level of his involvement:

- Improved the Port's relationship with tenants, residents of the Port District, and the Edmonds and Woodway communities.
- Rebuilt the marina program after the natural disaster in 1996 to a program has achieved national prominence.
- Developed a Public Plaza and Weather Center.
- Developed and implemented the Destination Port of Edmonds Program.
- Acquired the Harbor Square Buildings.
- Replaced the North Seawall and refurbished the Mid Marina Breakwater.
- Developed plans for a new Restroom Complex.
- Worked with the Edmonds Yacht Club to develop plans for a new yacht club building.

In conclusion, he wished the Port Commission and Staff of the Port of Edmonds the very best and continued success in the years to come.

Commissioner Faires expressed his belief that Mr. Keuss earned the unquestionable trust of the Commission. Aside from the competent manner in which he ran the Port, trust between the Executive Director, the Port Commission and the Port staff has made his tenure at the Port an unqualified success. He thanked him for his service.

## **WORK SESSION TO DISCUSS PROCESS FOR RECRUITING A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Commissioner Faires explained that the purpose of the special meeting is to develop the necessary documents for the recruitment process. He referred the Commission to the three draft documents that were prepared by him and Commissioner Block: job description, criteria for selection, and timeline. He invited the Commissioners to review each of the draft documents, make recommended changes, and prepare them for final approval at their regular meeting on January 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Job Description**

Commissioner Block briefly reviewed the draft job description, noting that “real estate operations and development” were highlighted more in the draft job description than has been done in the past. She explained that she and Commissioner Faires felt it would be valuable to have this expertise given the Port’s recent acquisition of the Harbor Square Buildings, as well as other Port properties.

Commissioner Orvis referred to the term “upper level management” which is used in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph. He expressed his concern that the Commission needs to have a clear understanding of what this term means. He suggested that “senior level management” would be more appropriate term. The remainder of the Commission concurred. Commissioner Orvis said he suspects they will receive a number of applications from middle management, and it is likely the Commission would be most interested in successful middle managers of larger organizations or senior managers of small organizations.

Commissioner Burkhart noted that the draft job description does not indicate that port-related experience is a requirement of the position. Commissioner Faires expressed his belief that while port-related experience would be a positive attribute, making it an absolute requirement would be too limiting. The Commission concurred.

Commissioner Block referred to the draft list of essential duties and responsibilities and noted that the list parallels the list the Commission has been using to review the performance of their current Executive Director. Commissioner Faires emphasized that the list was not intended to identify priorities. The Commission reviewed the list and noted that in the 5<sup>th</sup> bulleted item, the word “insure” should be changed to “ensure.”

The Commission discussed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> bulleted items were related and could be combined. Commissioner Faires suggested the items remain separate since leadership skills (3<sup>rd</sup> Item) are something the Commission really wants to focus on. The 5<sup>th</sup> item has more to do with administration actions and personnel relationships.

The Commission agreed to place the 5<sup>th</sup> bulleted item after the 3<sup>rd</sup> bulleted item since they are related to each other. Commissioner Burkhart suggested that because of its importance, the 8<sup>th</sup> bulleted item should be moved up higher on the list. The remainder of the Commission agreed to place the 8<sup>th</sup> bulleted item after the second bulleted item.

The Commission referred to the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph and agreed that the term “college degree and five years of management experience” should be changed to “Bachelors Degree or equivalent.” The Commission discussed that they are more interested in job experience than in a specific degree.

The Commission concurred that the job description should be finalized based on the comments provided and presented to the Commission for final approval on January 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Criteria for Selection**

Commissioner Faires explained that the purpose of the exercise is to identify the attributes they are looking for in an Executive Director. He suggested they start by listing the various attributes and then they could prioritize the list into the following three categories: those that are essential, those that are important but not criteria for elimination, and those that would be nice to have. He noted that the selection criteria would be utilized by the review committees throughout the process.

Commissioner Gouge suggested that the Commission first identify what they envision for the future of the Port, and then they could discuss how the new Executive Director should fit into these parameters. Creating a vision for the Port would allow the Commission to give clear direction to the future Executive Director.

Commissioner Orvis expressed his belief that the Commission has discussed the future of the Port at length. While the Commission has a clear understanding of where they think the Port should go, their hands are tied until the City agrees to allow changes to occur. Commissioner Block agreed this observation is true as far as the vision for the Harbor Square Property, but it would not apply to the Port's vision for their property west of Admiral Way. She agreed with Commissioner Gouge that they need to have a vision for how they want to move forward with these properties.

Commissioner Burkhart expressed her belief that it is critical that the new Executive Director is able to work with the community if they are to resolve the issues that currently prevent the redevelopment of Harbor Square. The Executive Director must have the ability to present the Port's position to the City in a tactful and smooth manner. She expressed her belief that the Port must continue to work on these issues until they are able to persuade the City to change their policies to allow redevelopment of not only Harbor Square but other properties near the waterfront. She summarized that while the Port is extremely fortunate to have a stable and competent staff to manage the properties located on the west side of Admiral Way, the challenge for the new Executive Director would be related to the properties on the east side of Admiral Way. Therefore, an Executive Director with real estate and redevelopment experience, as well as an understanding of the public process, would be extremely beneficial.

The Commission created a list of important criteria and then prioritized it as follows:

#### **Essential Criteria**

- Strong, successful manager with the ability to take initiative (*Not only manage staff, but take responsibility for how they perform*)
- Unquestionable ethics and honesty
- Competent at managing employee relations and concern for staff (*Use staff efficiently and give them opportunities and resources to do their jobs*)
- Strength in developing good community relations
- Communication skills
- Effective leadership skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Ability to accept responsibility for all Port activities
- Strategic planning skills (*Understand the importance of having a plan and knowing where the organization is going*)
- Ability to take initiative

#### **Important Criteria, but Not Criteria for Elimination**

- Real estate and re-development expertise
- Port and/or marina experience

- Public experience
- Financial management strengths

Criteria That Would Be Nice To Have

- Knowledge of environmental issues (*Understands the importance of the Department of Ecology's role and the environmental challenges the Port would face in the future*)
- Familiarity with the Revised Code of Washington and Washington Administrative Code
- Ability to think forward

Mr. Cattle recommended that the letter that is sent out to interested applicants should include the list of selection criteria and a request that applicants direct their responses to address the qualifications outlined in the criteria. The Commission agreed that it would be appropriate to inform applicants of the selection criteria. However, rather than sending the information out in a letter, applicants could be given directions on how to access the selection criteria via the Port's website.

The Commission agreed that the salary range should also be provided to applicants up front rather than after the initial screening. They reviewed the Washington Public Port Association's recent Survey of Port Positions and agreed that an appropriate salary range would be \$90,000 to \$120,000 per year. Mr. Cattle clarified that the posted salary range would not be equivalent to a bid, but a solicitation for offers. The Commission would have the ability to exceed the range when negotiating a contract with the finalist. He summarized that the salary range would serve as a guideline to the Commission and potential applicants.

Timeline and Schedule

Commissioner Faires recommended, and the remainder of the Commission agreed, that it would be appropriate to immediately start advertising the opening. A reporter from *THE ENTERPRISE* indicated that Mr. Keuss' resignation was announced in this morning's edition of both *THE ENTERPRISE* and *THE HERALD*. It was announced on their websites the previous evening.

The Commission confirmed that they would review and approve the final documents at their January 12<sup>th</sup> regular meeting. However, they agreed that it would not be necessary for the Commission to approve the ad copy before it is sent out to the various publications. The Commission concurred that staff should start advertising the position in various publications, and they noted that the most expeditious process would be to place on-line announcements with as many regional publications and organizations as possible.

The Commission agreed that if any of the finalists are from outside the West Coast Area, it would be possible to conduct the initial interviews over the phone. They further agreed that the Port should not accept applications from professional recruiters.

The Commission identified the following process for reviewing applications:

- All applications would be screened by the Executive Director as they come in based on the selection criteria adopted by the Commission. Applications that clearly do not meet the base criteria would be rejected.
- All remaining applications would be reviewed by the Screening Committee, who would select 6 to 9 of the most qualified to become semi-final candidates.
- The semi-final candidates would be interviewed by the Interview Panel, and they would identify three finalists for the Commission to interview.

The Commission discussed the process for completing background and reference checks for the semi-finalists. Ms. Drennan pointed out that the Port has a process for doing background checks on all new employees, but it requires the written permission of the applicants. The Commission agreed that the process would be quicker if the Port were to obtain permission to proceed with the background checks on line rather than by letter. The Commission discussed

that perhaps it would be appropriate for them to check the references of all semi-finalists, if possible. However, they agreed that the background check could be completed using the Port's standard process.

Mr. Cattle suggested the Commission wait to decide the best process for checking references until they know who the semi-finalists are. He noted that a person in his office is particularly good at addressing human resource issues, and she could likely be able to provide helpful service to help the Commissioners contact references. The Commission agreed that would be an appropriate approach.

The Commission agreed that the Screening Committee would consist of the Executive Director and two Commissioners. The Interview Panel would consist of two Commissioners who did not participate in other elements of the recruitment process, someone with real estate and re-development expertise, a representative from the City of Edmonds, a representative from the Town of Woodway, and a representative from the Washington Public Port Association or an executive director from another port. The Port's Executive Director, Mr. Keuss, would serve as the facilitator and would have the opportunity to provide comments. However, he would not participate in the panel's final recommendation to the Commission.

The Commission discussed opportunities for the community to be involved in the process. It was agreed that the public should be invited to submit questions that they would like the Commission to ask of the three finalists. When the interviews take place in an open public meeting, the Commission would ask the questions and the finalists would be invited to respond. This approach would give the public an opportunity to identify the attributes they would like the Commission to consider when making their final decision. The Commission also discussed whether or not the public should be invited to attend the Screening Committee meetings and the interviews that are conducted by the Interview Panel. They expressed a need to make the process as transparent and open to the public as possible. They agreed that it would not be appropriate to invite the public to the Screening Committee meetings, but it might be appropriate for them to attend the Interview Panel's meetings. However, it was emphasized that the public should not be allowed to participate and provide comments. The Commission agreed to make a final decision on this matter at a later date.

Commissioners Burkhart and Gouge suggested that the March screening process be expedited so that Commission could interview the final candidates between April 6<sup>th</sup> and April 10<sup>th</sup>. The Commission agreed this would be appropriate.

The Commission discussed the appropriate level of involvement by the Port Attorney, and Commissioner Faires suggested that it would be appropriate for Mr. Cattle to be part of the Commission's final interview process but not actively participate on the Screening Committee or the Interview Panel. Mr. Cattle agreed that the screening process would be best handled as described earlier, using the outlined criteria. However, he said it would be important for him to participate in the final interview process with the entire Commission. He noted that any questions that come up during the Screening Committee and Interview Panel processes could be forwarded to him for response.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Burkhart  
Port Commission Secretary